



OSWER Innovations Pilot

Integrated Tribal Environmental Management Center

The Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) Assistant Administrator Marianne Horinko in December 2001 initiated a series of innovative pilots to test new ideas and strategies for environmental and public health protection to make OSWER programs more efficient, effective, and user-friendly. A small amount of money is set aside to fund creative proposals submitted by OSWER Headquarters and Regional employees. EPA employees are encouraged to talk to States, Tribes, local governments and external stakeholders about proposal ideas and partner on a project. The creative projects test approaches to waste minimization, energy recovery, recycling, and land revitalization that may be replicated across various sectors, industries, communities, and regions. We hope these pilots will pave the way for programmatic and policy recommendations by demonstrating the environmental and economic benefits of creative, innovative approaches to the difficult environmental challenges we face today.

BACKGROUND

The 121 square mile Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation's Reservation is bordered by the northeastern portion of the State of Kansas. The Reservation lies within the Soldier Creek watershed, which is a critical ecosystem and resource for the Potawatomi community. They rely heavily on surface water to supply water needs. The land is predominantly used for growing crops and feeding range animals. General dumping of waste materials, abandoned vehicles, and other hazardous materials in creeks and low areas threaten water quality and public health. Agricultural runoff from fields and livestock areas also provide waste quality challenges.

PILOT APPROACH

The Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation, in partnership with the U.S. EPA Region 7, will expedite the development of an Integrated Tribal Environmental Management Center. The Center will bring together many different environmental management disciplines, with an emphasis on waste minimization, recycling, energy recovery, and water quality. Residents will be able to drop-off their recyclables; obtain mulch or compost for their gardens; donate hazardous household materials at a "swap shop"; obtain water quality analyses; harvest vehicle parts from a controlled storage

area for non-working vehicles; and observe and learn environmental practices that help make a safer and healthier home. It will also establish a comprehensive program that includes education, materials management, economic/business opportunity development, and land stewardship. The project seeks to ensure that no population is subjected to disproportionate environmental impacts.

The Environmental Center will integrate and advertise their environmental management activities. For example, waste lumber, casino organic waste, and other organic waste will be treated and composted. The mulch and compost will then be used to protect and nourish the Tribal Orchard nursery and future greenhouse efforts. The mulch, compost, and forestry products also will be marketed as products of prudent recycling and environmental management. This integrated comprehensive approach will build public support for the innovative retail opportunities created through environmental protection for this community. A goal for the Environmental Center is to become self-supporting as a result of the retail possibilities that are established.

INNOVATION

The Pilot will demonstrate the feasibility of melding solid waste management, recycling, water quality

protection, and entrepreneurship on a Native American Reservation. It will establish an environmental scheme that uniquely provides one-stop services and promotes community revitalization through environmental protection. This innovative approach removes many toxic and hazardous materials from potential illegal dumping, where it could readily harm children or the region's critically limited water supply.

BENEFITS

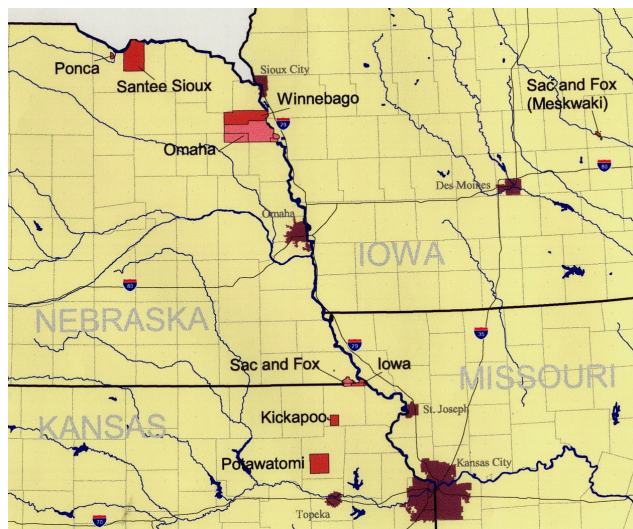
The primary benefits will be improved water quality, protection of critical ecosystems associated with the Soldier Creek watershed, and protection of the health of the elders and youth of the Potawatomi Reservation community. The Pilot will create a model for environmental management that will be directly transferable to other rural, agricultural, and tribal populations. In addition, development of the Environmental Center will create skilled labor jobs in materials, forestry, organic debris, automotive, and water quality management. The Environmental Center will divert hazardous and toxic materials from the present waste disposal stream into more appropriate and environmentally and economically sound management practices.

CONTACTS

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Visit the EPA OSWER Innovations web site at:
www.epa.gov/oswer/IWG.htm



Map of First Nations in EPA Region 7, including the Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation (lower center portion of map).

Environmental staff from Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation, Kickapoo Nation and EPA on a site visit in February 2001.

